A STUDY OF MOTIVATIONAL TRIGGERS & EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES OF MID-CAREER PROFESSIONALS PURSUING EXECUTIVE MBA IN ONLINE MODE

Synopsis of the Research Proposal
Submitted for the Registration in the

Ph.D. Program (Part-Time)
in
Management

By

Jyoti Nihalani
Enrollment No.- 25JPPHDDMS011

Under Supervision of

Dr. Shiv Kumar
Associate Professor

ICFAI Business School

The ICFAI University. Jaipur

A STUDY OF MOTIVATIONAL TRIGGERS & EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES OF MID-CAREER PROFESSIONALS PURSUING EXECUTIVE MBA IN ONLINE MODE

Synopsis of the Research Proposal
Submitted for the Registration in the

Ph.D. Program (Part-Time)
in
Management

By

Jyoti Nihalani
Enrollment No.- 25JPPHDDMS011

Under Supervision of

Dr. Shiv Kumar
Associate Professor

Jyoti Nihalani
Research Scholar

Dr. Shiv Kumar
Supervisor

ICFAI Business School

The ICFAI University. Jaipur

Sequence	Page No.
1. Front Page	1-2
2. Index	3
3. Abstract	4
4. Introduction	5-7
5. Review of Literature	7-11
6. Research Gap	12
7. Statement of Problem	12-13
8. Significance of the Study	13-14
9. Research Questions	14
10. Research Objectives	15
11. Research Hypotheses	15
12. Research Methodology	16-24
13. Scope and Limitations	25-26
14. Expected Outcomes	26-27
15. Research Timeline	28-29
16. References	30-35

1. Abstract:

The current paper concerns the motivational stimuli and the expected learning outcomes of the middle career professionals to pursue the Executive MBA (EMBA) programs supposed to be taken online. With the mounting pressure in the workplace being more fueled with speed and tendency to go digital, professionals are flocking to flexible learning as a tool to further develop their capabilities, career possibilities and leader potential. The study would seek to know the reasons as to why the large majorities in the middle stages of their life career, prior to completing, would desire to join online EMBA programs as well as comparing it's outcome of learning which they reckon would happen to them once they join such programs.

The mixed method research design is adopted and primary and secondary data is utilized. Primary data are utilized since questionnaires and interviews of a group of people are structured.

mid-career professionals are brought on board to get the data and evaluate the data and insights given by them. The secondary data is provided providing references to the literature and reports on the topic. To unveil the meaning of collected data, research uses the descriptive statistics, the correlation and thematic analysis.

The results are likely to show that career development, learning of skills and individual growth are major motivators of enrollment in a particular institution. Moreover, the study is expected to determine that there is a strong correlation between motivation to expected learning outcomes, such as leadership development and competence in the professional field.

The study has a contribution to academic literature, in that it seeks to fill the gaps of knowledge concerning the concept of motivation in online executive education, and share meaningful information to guide the concept of how institutions can tailor more effective and learner-centered EMBA programs.

Keywords:
Online Executive MBA (EMBA), Mid-Career Professionals, Motivational Triggers, Learning Outcomes, Skill Development, Career Advancement

2. Introduction

2.1 Background of Executive MBA in Online Mode

The Executive Master of Business Administration (EMBA) programs have always been made in such a manner that their purpose is to improve the managerial, leadership and strategic decision-making abilities among the professionals who are already in their career and yet opting to gain professional knowledge. Over the recent years, with the development of digital technologies and the growth of the need for the flexibility of learning, online EMBA programs are introduced, which enable the professionals to complete further level of education & academics goal without interfering in the working obligations. These initiatives combine both academic rigour and practical applied relevance, researching real-life business issues and leadership. The change to online delivery has also created the opportunity of making executive education globally accessible, where professionals living in an assortment of geographic and organizational settings are able to do so.

2.2 Concept of Mid-Career Professionals

Mid-career professionals refer to the individuals having 5 to15 years of work experience, who have already arranged themselves in their areas of expertise but need additional development, career, or shift to leadership position. Phase in career growth which has more responsibility, professional maturity and motivation to improve their skills.

Mid-career workers are usually exposed to some special troubles which may include stagnating careers, obsolescence of skills and required skills may have to gather in quick changing employment demands. According to the research, job characteristics, including autonomy, the significance of tasks, and development opportunities, have a potent impact on the motivation and satisfaction of the mid-career professionals (Bukth and Fatima, 2024). Moreover, these professionals exhibit unique motivation patterns in contrast to those in the early-career group since most are often intrinsically motivated by the need to develop personally, grow their careers, and become a leader (VanAntwerp and Wilson, 2018).

2.3 Importance of Motivation in Adult Learning

In the case of executive learning, motivation is also a decisive factor of success. As opposed to traditional or usual learners, adult learners are autonomous, purposeful, and driven by certain career and personal goals. Their learning behavior is influenced by two aspects: intrinsic (self-improvement, personal growth) and extrinsic (promotions, salary increments, changes of careers).

Motivation in this case, in reference to middle career professionals, is strongly associated with the perceived value and relevance of the educational program. It is observed that learners tend to pursue activities to learn when they see a direct relationship between the program and their career or job performance (Mahapatra and Dash, 2021). Moreover, organizational support, career goals, and the necessity to stay competitive in a fast-changing working environment influence motivation in executive education (Mahapatra and Dash, 2022).

2.4 Overview of Learning Outcomes

Online EMBA programs are considered to possess a broad spectrum of learning outcomes, such as leadership growth, strategic thinking, problem-solution, communication skills, and decision-making skills. These results will be meant to improve both individual and organizational performance.

This study suggests that executive education programs can have a considerable effect on the leadership skills of the participants and the transfer of the learning of these skills into practice in the workplace (Hruby, 2026). Also, EMBA programs provide the program with advancing careers, higher job satisfaction, and better professional performance (Shetti, 2018).

2.5 Theoretical Foundation

The paper is based on the fundamental theoretical models explaining adult learning and motivation. According to Adult Learning Theory (Andragogy), adult learners are self-directed, they bring some prior experience to the learning process and they like problem-relevant and problem-based learning. This theory can especially be applied to the mid-career professionals that need their knowledge to be practical and applicable.

One more significant theory is Self-determination Theory which dwells upon intrinsic motivation and the influence of autonomy, competence, and relatedness on learning behavior. These aspects

are essential in the online EMBA programs in contexts to measure engagement and effectiveness of learning.

2.6 Research Context and Need

The modern workplace environment is marked by a high rate of technological progress, internationalization, and transforming company organizations environments, which require a constant learning and improvement of skills. Mid-career professionals are under growing pressure to update the required competencies & adjust to new roles and responsibilities.

Although online EMBA programs have become popular, the element of exhaustive knowledge pertaining to the motive factors that lead professionals towards joining these programs and the learning outcomes that they expect to acquire is still the issue. Researches have been done on the program effectiveness or career outcomes in which hardly any emphasis has been placed on motivation and expected learning outcomes.

Thus, the study will focus on fulfilling the following gaps through the analysis of the motivation triggers and the predicted outcomes of learning among the middle-career professionals who undertake on-line EMBA degrees and contribute to academic literature and implications on the executive education providers.

3. Review of Literature

3.1 Studies on Executive MBA Programs

Over the years, executive MBA (EMBA) programs have undergone a tremendous change in ensuring that it addresses the dynamics of the global workforce. Conventional EMBA programs were based on conventional classroom learning including case studies, involvement with peers and learning by doing. But, by the process of digital transformation, online and hybrid EMBA models are becoming dominant. It is found that the existing models of executive education, both traditional and online, can exist and complement one another by using their respective advantages (Stanton and Stanton, 2017).

Current research shows that contemporary EMBA programs are being shaped in a way which prepare the so-called super executives through the incorporation of the concepts of innovation, leadership, and strategic thinking into the program (Aithal and Karanth, 2024). Such programs are meant to build managerial skills and equip professionals to take on board complicated tasks within organizations. Besides, as per the perceptions of the participants, EMBA programs has a significant role in professional learning, leadership development, and career progression (Kitchlew, 2020).

It is also noted in the literature that it is important to match EMBA programs with the demands of the workplace. An important key indicators of MBA program performance is knowledge and skill transfer to the workplace, as it will determine how practical the learning is (Prince et al., 2015). Also, the EMBA programs are increasingly becoming perceived as a type of human capital investment which contributes to increased long-term career growth and employability (Marino et al., 2019).

3.2 Motivation Theories in Professional Education

Motivation is a key factor in establishing involvement and effectiveness of learners on executive education. The intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors in adult learners especially with mid-career professionals include career advancement, individual growth, and requirements of the organization.

Knowles has suggested the idea of Andragogy, which offers an adult learning behavior in terms of a theoretical framework. It highlights that an adult learner is self-directed, comes with his or her previous experiences into learning and that relevance of learning to individuals' life and their careers motivates them. Need to know, self-concept, experience, willingness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation are the key principles of andragogy that can mostly be applied to the EMBA programs.

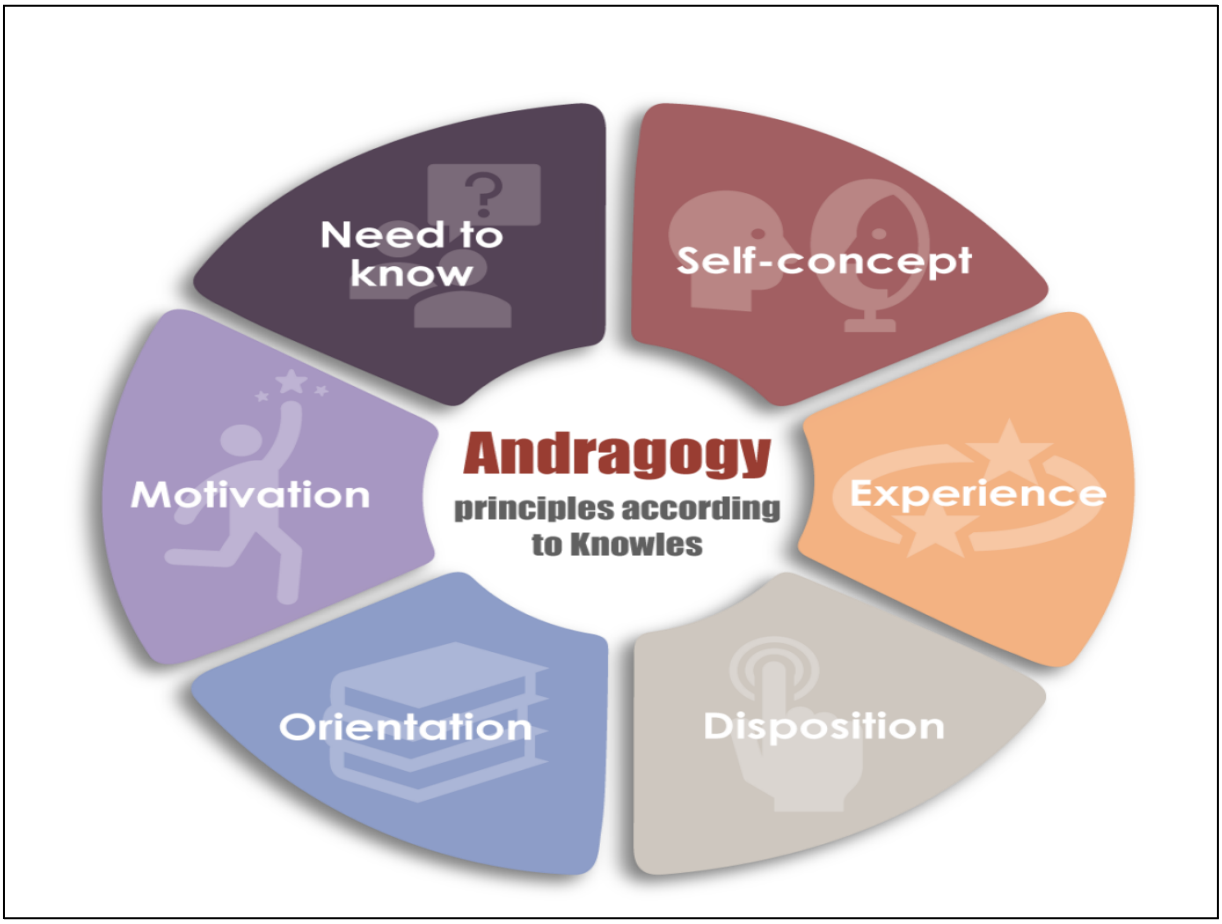


Figure 1: Andragogy Principles

The figure above presents the fundamental concepts of adult learning which correlates motivation with the experiences, the self-concept and the orientation of the learners towards learning. These ideals has significant role in the development of EMBA programs which should meet the requirements of professionals with mid-career experience.

It is also found that self-awareness and the development of leadership can be considered the key motivational outcomes of MBA education, which helps the professionals recognize their assets and weaknesses (Rubens et al., 2018). Moreover, the expediency of experiential learning methods also serves as an effective motivational strategy as it offers real-world learning (Grant, 2025).

3.3 Factors Influencing Mid-Career Learning Decisions

Professionals in the mid-career stage have special challenges including career level plateaus, highly skilled and skills becoming obsolete, as well as the growing demands in their job, thus making them decide to pursue further studies. Research indicates that career stagnation is a

common reason why professionals strive to acquire higher education as a career rejuvenation and development strategy (Unnikrishnan and Rajeev, 2024).

The most important factors affecting the Enrollment in EMBA programs are professional development requirements, organizational encouragement and individual goals. Studies note that managerial education courses are considerably important in professional growth in terms of improved leadership and decision-making (Alam, 2021).

In addition to this, programs of EMBA are commonly rated by mid-career professionals for flexibility, relevance and even ROI. This is particularly because of the ever-expanding need to offer flexible learning materials that have encouraged the development of online EMBA programs, which offer convenience to learners without affecting their professional responsibilities (Dar and Sharma, 2024).

3.4 Online Learning Effectiveness

Learning in online mode has been extensively researched regarding the achievements of executive education. EMBA online programs are based on online technologies, and the use of Learning Management Systems (LMS), virtual classes, and AI-powered resources makes the learning process interactive and engaging.

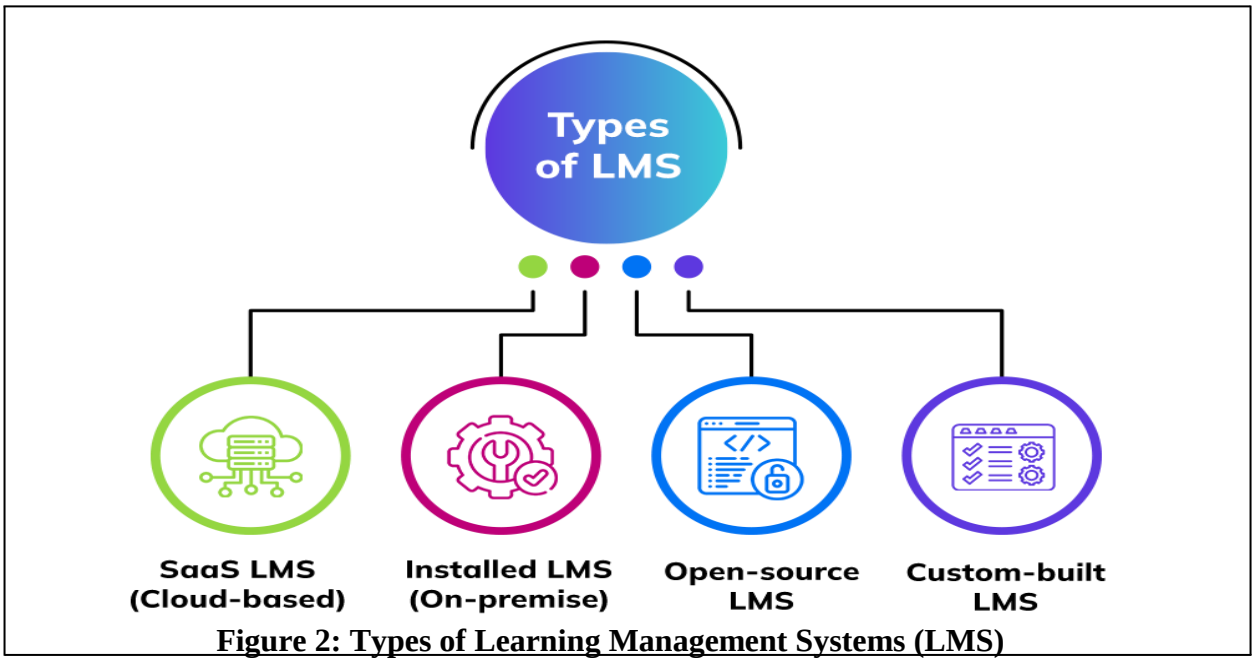


Figure 2: Types of Learning Management Systems (LMS)

The figure above depicts the various LMS, such as cloud-based, on-premise, open-source and

mobile LMS to provide online learning that is important. These platforms provide flexible, accessible and scalable learning platforms and serve working professionals.

Research showcases that well designed online MBA programs can generate similar learning results as the traditionally-delivered programs through interactive applications, team learning and live feedback (Wood et al., 2026). Moreover, mixed types of learning, including web-based and classroom components, are confirmed to result in increases effectiveness & interest of learning (Hilliard, 2015).

The emergence of borderless learning has also revolutionized the education sector through the possibility of international cooperation and the ability to exchange knowledge (Andrin et al., 2024). Nevertheless, possible issues like technological incompatibility, absence of interaction, and diverse degrees of digital literacy should be resolved to make online education effective (Najjar et al., 2025).

3.5 Learning Outcomes of Executive Education

EMBA programs should not only lie within knowledge acquisition, but also develop skills, create behavior change, and enhance career growth as well. It has been proved, MBA programs play the important role of developing leadership, strategic thinking, and problem-solving skills (Hernandez, 2015).

The fact of the matter is that executive education courses are also linked to better workplace performance since those that go through them can implement the acquired ideas in real-life situations (Prince et al. 2015). Also, the development of leadership is a main products of EMBA programs because organizations need more leaders capable of maneuvering in the complex and dynamic environment (Moldoveanu & Narayandas, 2019).

The online EMBA programs specifically are dedicated to the sphere of online competencies and flexibility in particular, which are very basic in the contemporary working environment. The learning strategies that are experiential also make these courses better effective since they close the divide between theory and practice (Grant, 2025).

3.6 Research Gaps in Existing Literature

Even though many studies are conducted on EMBA programs and executive education, there are still lot of gaps. First, mainly all the research is tied to the effectiveness of the programs and career outcomes and there are not even few attempts to determine the motivation stimuli which contribute to the mid-career professionals to enroll online EMBA programs.

Second, there is no research done to explore relationship between motivation and perceived learning outcome under online executive learning. Another trend prevailing in the existing literature that has been domestically common among the current research is that both the processes of motivation and learning outcomes are thought to be independent without analyzing the interdependence of these two variables.

Also, very little research focusing on the exact needs and expectations of respective mid-career professionals on online learning environments particularly in the emerging economies. The rapid growth of online learning and increasing importance of lifelong learning point to the need of more specific and contextualized research (Osman et al., 2024).

Finally, AI-based and individual-centered learning systems, the impact of online platforms and their effects on motivation, and educational outcomes are a poorly researched topic. Such gaps should be filled to ensure the creation of effective EMBA programs that will meet the demands of contemporary professionals and allow both individual and an organization to develop.

4. Present Study

4.1 Statement of the Problem

Need to have easy and flexible education in the modern electronic world has seen the popularity of online Executive MBA (EMBA) program now shoot into the sky by reducing an extremely long period in time. Particularly appealing to mid-career workers, who are willing to reduce their professional engagement to improve their professional skill in the fields of management, leadership and career opportunities without affecting their professional engagements.

As per existing literature, career progressions have changed because of flexibility in learning and learning online; such a phenomenon in learners, though, it is still needs to be clearly understood (Andrade and).

Alden-Rivers, 2019; Dar and Sharma, 2024). The career plateau, obsolescence on skills, and the growing need of work among the mid-career professionals are just some of the reasons that may motivate the decision to pursue further education (Unnikrishnan and Rajeev, 2024).

Another doubt is the doubt, regarding the semblance of the envisaged and actual learning outcomes of the online EMBA programs. Though efforts were made to develop a leadership.

program, strategic thinking and other management aspects and much of the efforts will proceed without an empirical test to know whether the outcome of the participants expectations before the program have been achieved or not. It is found, online/blended learning activities can be potential in promoting leadership actions and professional skills; although the nature programs and their presentation modes might influence the outcomes of learning (Osman et al., 2024; Hilliard, 2015).

Moreover, the fast development of the digital learning environment such as borderless and technology-driven education systems bring the new opportunities and challenges in the field of executive education (Andrin et al., 2024; Najjar et al., 2025). The question of motivation of the learners and success of such program has however not been effectively addressed.

The difference in the level of knowledge of the motivational stimuli and deterioration between the predicted and the actual results of the learning process of the group of the discussed mid-career specialists working on online EMBA degrees, thus, constitute the research question. This issue should be addressed to design the programs better, deliver the learning process more effectively and provide the learners with the meaningful results of the learning process.

4.2 Significance of Study

Our study can be of immense significance to different stakeholders, including practitioners, scholars and instructors.

1. First, the results of the current research will assist educational institutions to develop more effective and realistic EMBA programs to research the most significant motivational issues that impact the enrolment decision. These factors will be familiar and will help them to customize their curricula, teach back vehicles to suit mid-career professionals. This particularly plays significant role in regard to the digital transformation process, and the

leadership and the organizational cultures are immensely pertinent in the establishment of the learning experiences (Jandigulov et al., 2023; Osman et al., 2024).

2. Secondly, the study will be crucial in the professionals in informative judgments concerning the participation in the online EMBA programs. Knowing about the anticipated learning outcomes and how they are related to the career objective, professionals can determine the possibilities of the significant benefits of such programs and make strategic career choice. As per the research, the importance of managerial education may be valuable to aid professional growth, leadership qualities, and professional development (Alam, 2021; Isazada and Jafarov, 2024).

3. Thirdly, the study is a contribution to the scholastic literature since it attempts to fill the literature gaps on motivation & also on learning outcomes in online executive education. Although the former research was based on the program effectiveness and program development leadership, on the sphere of online EMBA programs, there is a huge lack of the research which can establish the correlation between the motivation and the potential outcomes to expect. This gap will be attempted to be filled in this paper by providing empirical evidence on these relations.

In addition, the research is in tandem with the changing needs of the contemporary working environment where lifelong learning and acquiring new skills is indispensable to success in a career. The further significance of executive education is emphasized by the growing significance of managerial competencies, emotional intelligence, and leadership skills (Boyatzis and Cavanagh, 2018; Avetisyan et al., 2024).

4.3 Research Questions

The study seeks to get answers of the below research questions:

1. What are the key motivational factors that drive mid-career professionals to pursue online EMBA programs?
2. What are the expected learning outcomes of mid-career professionals enrolling in online EMBA programs?
3. How do online EMBA programs contribute to professional development and career

advancement?

4. Is there a relationship between motivation and expected learning outcomes in online executive education?
5. To what extent do online EMBA programs meet the expectations of mid-career professionals?

4.4 Objectives of the Study

The primary/ main objectives of our study is following:

- To identify the **motivational triggers** that influence mid-career professionals to pursue online EMBA programs.
- To analyze the **expected learning outcomes** of professionals enrolling in online EMBA programs.
- To examine the **relationship between motivation and expected learning outcomes** in the context of online executive education.
- To evaluate the **effectiveness of online EMBA programs** in meeting the expectations and professional development needs of participants.

4.5 Hypotheses of the Study

Based on the objectives and research questions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: There is a significant relationship between motivational factors and the decision of mid-career professionals to enroll in online EMBA programs.

H2: Motivational factors significantly influence the expected learning outcomes of mid-career professionals.

H3: Online EMBA programs have a significant positive impact on the professional development of mid-career professionals.

H4: There is a significant relationship between expected learning outcomes and the perceived effectiveness of online EMBA programs.

H5: The alignment between motivation and learning outcomes significantly affects participant satisfaction and program success.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The current research perspective takes the approach of the descriptive and analytic research design by investigating in a systematic manner the motivation triggers and anticipated learning outcomes among mid-career practitioners undertaking online Executive MBA (EMBA) programs. The main features, perceptions, and motivations of the participants are revealed and described through a descriptive approach, whereas the element of analysis helps to investigate the correlations between the variables in terms of motivation and their anticipated outcomes.

The research is carried out in a mixed-method, which combines both advanced and qualitative research methods, so as to draw an in-depth picture of the research problem. Whereas quantitative data will give calculable information to patterns and relationships, the qualitative data works for more about the experiences and views of the participants. The inclusion of a larger questionnaire-based dataset enhances the statistical validity & affcose reliability of the research findings.

In addition, the research will be based upon both primary and secondary sources of information. Primary data is obtained directly through respondents to obtain real time information and secondary data through journals, reports and scholarly literature to substantiate the results. This combination adds more confidence to rely and improve validity of the research.

5.2 Sample / Participants

The authors propose mid-career workers with at least 5 years of working experience, who are enrolled into or have been interested in the EMBA program in Online mode as the target population for this proposed study. These members are chosen as the potential audience of the executive education and the ones with corresponding exposure in their professional status.

Determination of sample size will do statistical power analysis for the quantitative survey phase targeting 330-350 valid responses from relevant professionals to support robust generalizations across demographics like industry and experience level. Complementing this, the qualitative interviews will be done till the saturation is occurred, typically with 20-35 participants, ensuring rich depth on personal drivers and outcome perceptions without redundancy. The sampling technique will be identical to non-probability sampling (convenience and purposive sampling), but

to have an opportunity to receive more responses and make the sample more balanced, Google Forms questionnaire and interviews will be utilized to collect the data.

5.3 Data Collection Methods

The study employs both **primary and secondary methods of data collection** to gather comprehensive information.

1. **Primary Data Collection:** Primary data is obtained with the help of questionnaire and the interview with middle-level professionals. These will provide an opportunity to take an in-depth look at the motivation, expectations, and experience of the participants with regard to online EMBA programs. The interactive character of interviews is such that the researcher is able to get rich qualitative information and clarify other answers where the researcher feels that it requires a clarification.
2. **Secondary Data Collection:** The secondary data is acquired through industry reports , academic journals, research papers and reliable online databases. This information forms a theoretical and contextual background of the study and allows seeing current trends, frameworks, and results of executive education, motivation, and online learning.

5.4 Research Instrument

The main research tool for study will be structured questionnaire. The questionnaire will be created to gather quantitative and qualitative data of the respondents systematically.

The questionnaire includes:

- Closed-ended questions (e.g., multiple-choice and Likert scale) to measure motivational factors and expected learning outcomes.
- Open-ended questions to capture detailed opinions and personal experiences of participants.

5.5 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data is analyzed using a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques.

Quantitative Analysis:

- Descriptive statistics such as percentages are used to summarize and present data in a clear and concise manner.
- Correlation analysis is applied to check the relationships of motivational factors with expected learning outcomes.

Qualitative Analysis:

- The thematic analysis is employed to extract common themes and patterns in the responses during interviews. This is useful in gaining more privileged details regarding the motivations and expectations of the participants.

Data Presentation Techniques:

To enhance clarity and interpretation, data is presented using:

- Graphs and charts (bar graphs, pie charts)
- Visual comparisons
- Trend identification
- Distribution analysis

5.6 Ethical Considerations

In this study, ethics are a critical aspect toward safeguarding the subjects and the study integrity.

1. Informed Consent: As a prerequisite to data collection, the participants will be acquainted with the aim of the study, and their voluntary participation will be advised.
2. Anonymity: Personal data of participants stays in confidentiality and utilized for the research only.
3. Privacy: All information received is stored safely and manipulated without breach of privacy.

These practices are ethical, which guarantees that the research process is responsible and does not prejudice participants of the study.

6. Data Analysis / Discussion (Proposed)

6.1 Analysis of Motivational Factors

It will describe the suggested data analysis & interpretation plan to use the research. The analysis will consider both the quantitative and qualitative methodology to be thorough and to come out with the research problem on motivational triggers and anticipated learning outcomes of the mid-career professionals who enroll at the online EMBA programs.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Data which will be gathered using structured questionnaires will be analyzed using suitable descriptive as well as inferential statistics.

- Descriptive Statistics:
  Demographic variables and the core constructions like motivation and expected learning outcomes will be summarized using percentages, frequencies, and mean values. Such measures will assist in the determination of patterns and trends in respondents.
- Inferential Statistics:
  Correlation analysis will take place in order to analyse the correlation between motivational factors and the anticipated learning outcomes. Other tests like the regression analysis can be employed to prove the strength and direction of relationship between variables where necessary.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic analysis will be utilized to analyse qualitative data acquired with the help of interviews and open-ended responses.

- Codings and categorizations will include responses as topics like career motivation, personal growth, leadership expectations, and learning experiences.
- There will also be patterns and recurring concepts that will be discovered to get a more in-depth understanding of the perception and experience of the participants.
- The qualitative results are bound to supplement the quantitative results and will allow a more holistic interpretation of the data.

Measurement and Categorization of Variables

The key variables that will be involved in the study will include:

- Independent Variable: Motivational factors- career growth, skill development, personal growth, salary growth, designation growth
- Dependent Variable: Anticipated learning outcomes- leadership skills, strategic thinking, professional development

These variables will be assessed on the basis of Likert scale (e.g., 1 =Strongly Disagree through 5 = Strongly Agree) responses and will be categorized based on assessments through respective answers to be analysed. The units of measure will be well spelt out to maintain uniformity and precision.

Mathematical Expressions and Models

All mathematical formulations applied in the study will be provided in italic and have a proper numbering to make them clear and easy to refer to. For example:

- Mean calculation
- Correlation coefficient

The numbers of all the models and equations will be provided in the format of sequence and described clearly in the text.

The motivation analysis shall concentrate on defining and classifying the key variables which determine the urge of the mid-career professionals to pursue online EMBA programs. There are motivational drivers which will be grouped into:

- Intrinsic factors: personal development, interest in learning, self-actualization
- Extrinsic factors: career advancement, salary growth, job security

Quantitative data gathered with the help of the structured questionnaire will be processed with the help of descriptive statistics presented in percentages in order to calculate which motivational factors could be considered the most dominant. Also, thematic analysis of qualitative data collected via interviews will be used to determine common trends and in-depth knowledge of the

professional motivation.

Findings will be supported and compared using the following figure based on the existing trends in adult learning motivation:

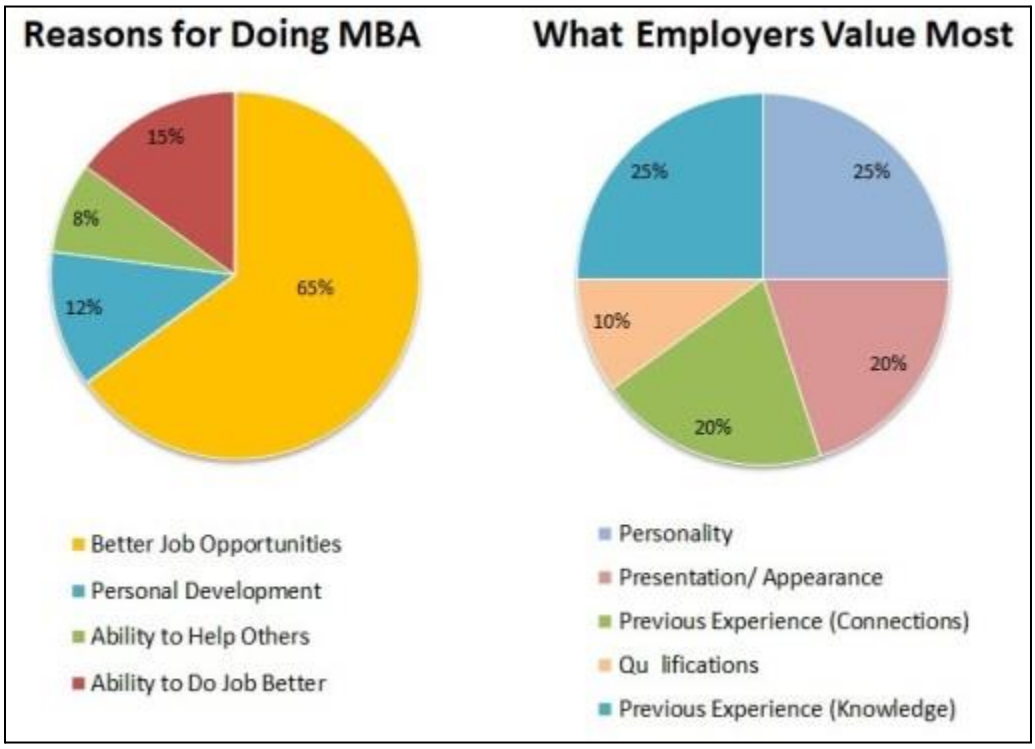


Figure 3: Reasons Why Adults Decide to Study

This value will assist in a visual comparison between study's result and overall adult learning motivations like interest in the subject, acquisition of qualification and better employment opportunities. These variables are likely to correspond with the prior studies that reveal that career development and ability improvement of professionals belong to the leading motivators among mid-careers (Mahapatra and Dash, 2021).

Moreover, the dissection will also be on the extent of job-related factors including role relevance and growth opportunities on the motivation levels and the level of satisfaction (Bukth and Fatima, 2024). The differences in motivation patterns in the mid-career and early-career professionals will also be discussed in order to know about the long-term career orientation and prospects of leadership (VanAntwerp and Wilson, 2018).

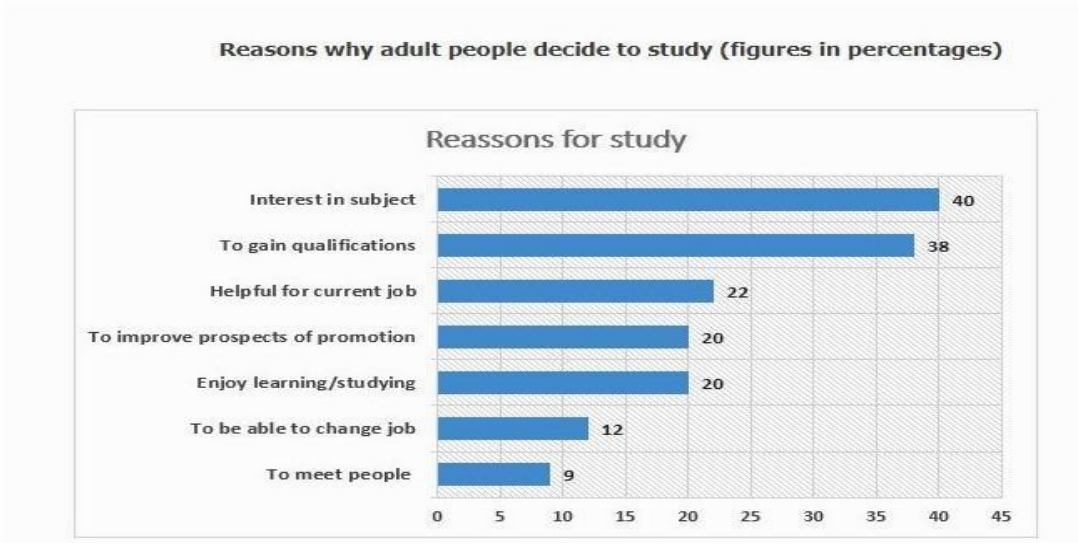
6.2 Comparison of Expected Learning Outcomes

The research will examine the expectations of the participants of the online EMBA programs and the comparison of the same with the expected outcomes of the programs. The major anticipated results will be:

- Leadership development
- Strategic thinking
- Managerial and decision-making skills
- Professional networking

Frequency and percentage distribution will be used to analyze the quantitative responses whereas thematic coding will be used to interpret the qualitative responses. The following figure will be incorporated to support comparative analysis:

Figure 4: Reasons for Doing MBA & Employer Expectations



This number will help in determining the possible discrepancies between the expectations of learners (e.g. better job opportunities, personal development) and those of the employer (e.g. personality, experience, knowledge).

This gap will be assessed on whether online EMBA programs are effectively closing it. According to the previous research, properly designed executive education courses have an impressive positive impact on performance in the workplace and leadership skills (Kitchlew et al., 2021).

Moreover, applying learned skills to the areas of professional practice will also be taken as a major result of successful learning (Hruby, 2026).

6.3 Interpretation of Results

The interpretation stage will be aimed at the analysis of the connection between the motivational factors and the anticipated learning outcomes. A correlation analysis will be conducted to check if there are higher levels of motivation either correlated with high or specific learning expectations.

Additionally, broader market trends will be incorporated into the interpretation:

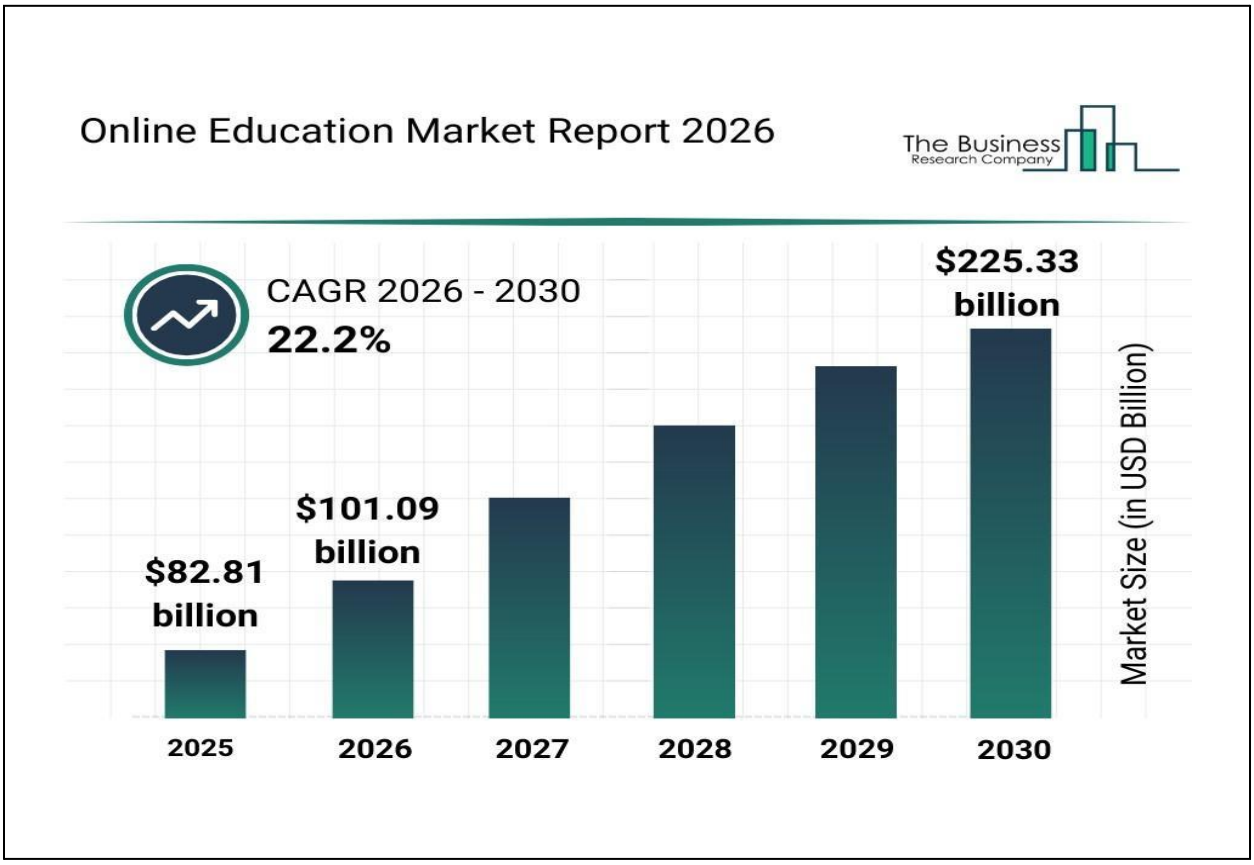


Figure 6: Online Education Market Growth

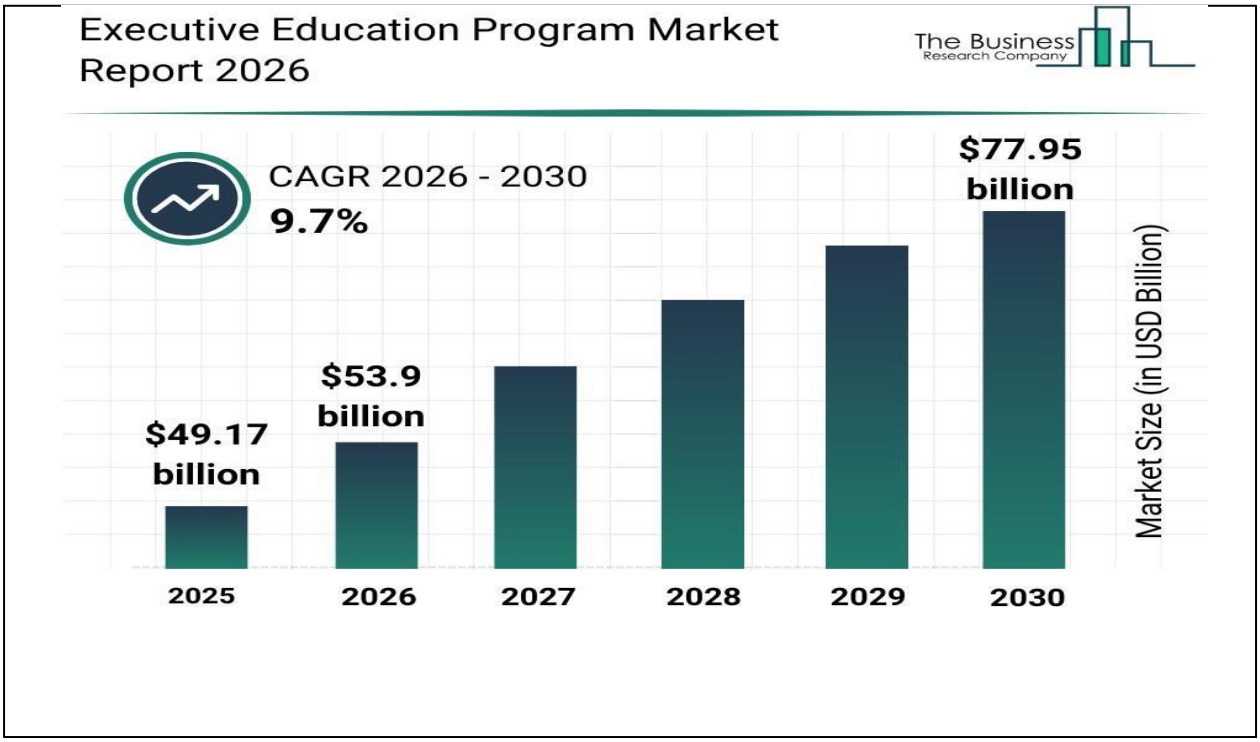


Figure 7: Executive Education Market Growth

Such statistics will give background information in that they will bring to the fore the fast growth of online and executive education markets. The trend of growth shows the growing demand and proves the topicality of the EMBA programs in the modern professional development. It also its reflection becomes the dynamic worth of MBA education due to technology advancement and adaptative needs in the workplace (Górka et al., 2025).

The interpretation of results will focus on:

- Identifying key motivational drivers among respondents
- Comparing expected learning outcomes across different groups
- Examining the relationship between motivation and learning outcomes
- Linking findings with existing theories such as Adult Learning Theory and Self-Determination Theory

The statistical formulae and analytical procedures that will be employed in the study will all be founded on the conventional statistical procedures and will be properly referenced within the text. Please note that the reliability and validity of the findings are guaranteed with identification analytical tools.

7. Scope and Limitations

7.1 Scope of the Study

The breadth of case study focus resides in the motivation stimuli and anticipated learning results of midcareer practitioners enrolling in online Executive MBA (EMBA) courses. The study will particularly consider professionals that have a minimum of five years of professional experience and are currently enrolled in or have thought of taking online EMBA coursework.

The research is confined to the online and flexible learning environments context, which has become significant in recent years thanks to the improvement of digital technologies and the need to continuously encourage professional development. Online EMBA programs have become more applicable due to flexible learning structures that provide professionals with an opportunity to juggle between work and education (Andrade and Alden-Rivers, 2019).

The paper further investigates the role of online education in leadership development, management skills, and a career advance, which is in line with the changing demands of the new workplace (Isazada and Jafarov, 2024). It takes into account, also, the larger picture of digital transformation in education whereby borderless learning spaces and platforms led by tech are transforming professional learning experiences (Andrin et al., 2024).

In addition, the paper sheds some light on the impact of organizational and leadership involvement to institutional support in online educational systems and the consequences of learning (Osman et al., 2024). With these points, the research will help in enhancing the research on the effectiveness and relevance of online EMBA programs in the current dynamic working environment.

7.2 Limitations of Study

Even though this study adds value, it has below mentioned limitations.

1. To begin with, there will be statistically suitable size of sample (approximately 330-350 respondents) involved but, because of the non-probability sampling method, the study might be too late to apply, to the whole population of mid-career professionals.
2. Secondly, the research is limited to online EMBA courses and does not include the use of the traditional classroom or hybrid courses. As much as online education is rapidly

increasing, it might be restricted by this kind of narrow scope when attempting to make a comparison between the results of various methods of executive education. Online learning is considered to be effective depending on the design of the program, technological support, and involvement of learners (Najjar et al., 2025; Hilliard, 2015).

3. Thirdly, the study is based on the self-reported data, and therefore, it can be exposed to biases (including the social desirability bias, and subjective interpretation). The respondents can give answers depending on their personal perceptions and not on the objective perceptions, this may interfere with the accuracy of the findings.
4. Also, the dynamic aspect of digital education and professional growth indicates that the results might be affected by the fast-changing trends in technology, working needs, and learning techniques (Dar and Sharma, 2024, Akmen et al., 2024).
5. Finally, the organizational culture, leadership support, and personal career stages can also be included as the factors that might influence motivation and learning outcomes but they might not be covered in the scope of the current research (Jandigulov et al., 2023; Macedo et al., 2023).

8. Expected Outcomes

8.1 Identification of Key Motivational Drivers

Another of the main anticipated results is that the significant motivational drivers to take up online EMBA programs will be identified among the mid-career professionals. These motivational factors can be career growth, knowledge improvement, leadership growth, and a competitive factor in a fast changing job market.

Studies indicate that the desire to break any career stagnations and get accustomed to the new working conditions gradually promotes the promotion of learning among professionals (Unnikrishnan and Rajeev, 2024). Also, managerial education courses can be instrumental in increasing professional capabilities and facilitating professional advancement (Alam, 2021).

8.2 Insights into Professional Learning Expectations

The research will be useful in expanding knowledge regarding the expectations of learning among mid-career professionals, especially online EMBA programs. Such expectations can involve

development of leadership competencies, strategic thinking capabilities and practical competency of being able to solve problems.

The establishment of executive education programs is simply tailored to these demands through incorporation of experiences with digital tools, real world applications, and experiential education. This use of methods increases the overall effectiveness of learning and helps to connect the requirements of the workplace with educational achievements (Boyatzis and Cavanagh, 2018; Avetisyan et al., 2024).

In addition, the paper will illuminate the perception of professionals regarding the relevance of online learning in the realization of their professional objectives as well as enhancing their performance in general. An important outcomes of EMBA program participation is expected to be leadership experiences and opportunities of professional growth (Greene et al., 2025).

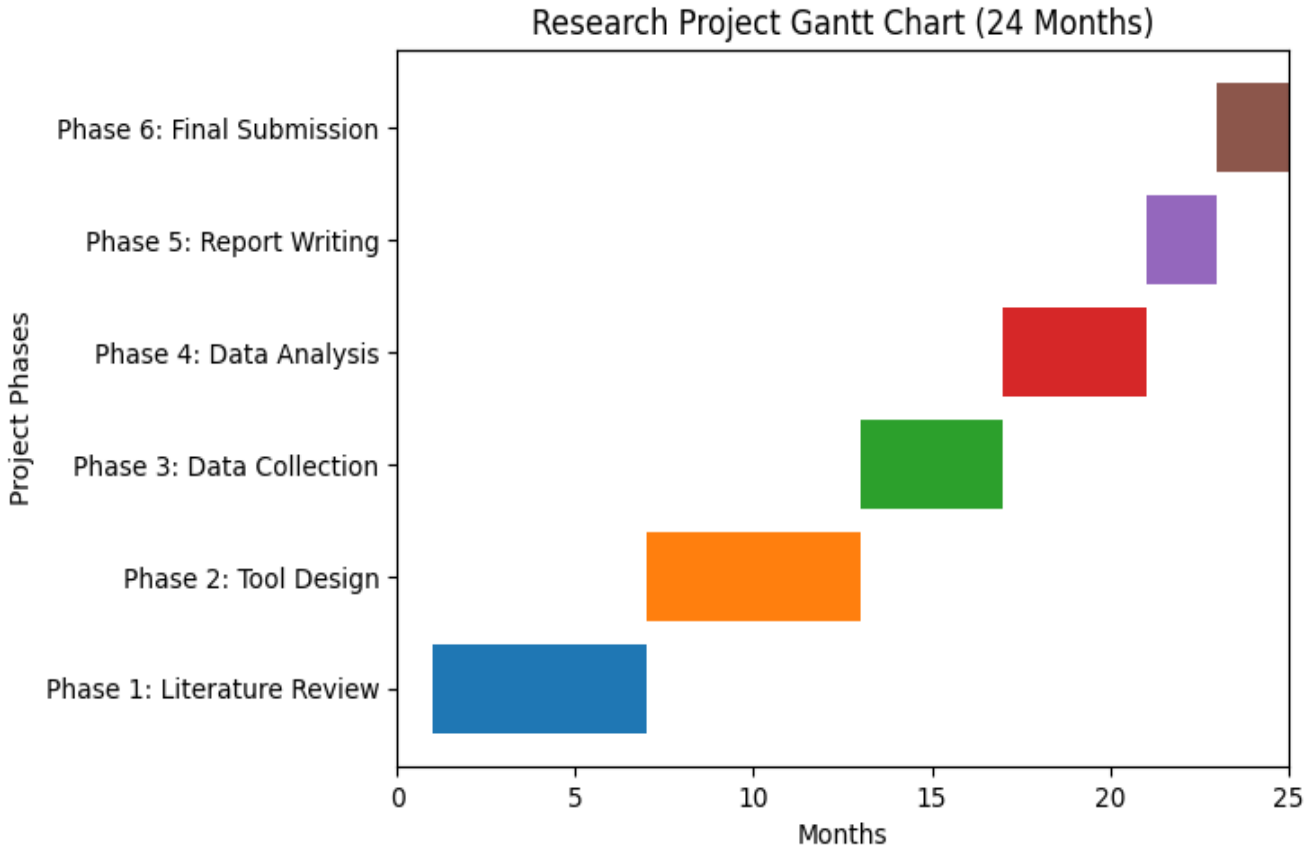
8.3 Recommendations for Improving EMBA Programs

According to the findings, the research should offer practical guidelines towards the enhancement of the online EMBA programs. The recommendations can be based on the improvement of the curriculum format, integration of innovations, and the correlation of training content with industry requirements.

Learner centered and flexible approaches that support various mid career professionals needs, may be beneficial to the institutions. Digital integration, application of interactive learning and personalized approach of delivering can enhance program effectiveness to a very substantial extent (Osman et al., 2024).

Moreover, the research can indicate how to make the organization support stronger, enhance the current learner engagement, and make the overall quality better of the executive education programs. The focus on developing leading and managerial practice will also inform the institutions in creating programs to enable professionals to meet future challenges (Isazada and Jafarov, 2024).

9. Work Plan / Timeline



The study will be done in the span of two years (24 months) of time to give a thorough and methodical fulfillment of all the research processes.

- Phase 1 (Months 1-6): Broad literature review and identification of gaps in the extant research to develop a sound theoretical framework.
- Phase 2 (Months 7-12): design of research tools, case structured questionnaires (Google

Forms) and interview schedules and pilot testing and publication of first research paper.

- Phase 3 (Months 13-16): Data collection (questionnaire and interviews) should be provided: the adequate sample is to be selected and a great number of answers should be anticipated.

- Phase 4 (Month 17-20): Descriptive analysis descriptive statistics, correlation analysis & thematic analysis and publication of second research paper.

- Phase 5 (Months 21 -22): Interpretation of results and writing of report.

- Phase 6 (Months 23-24): Final editing and format as well as submission of the research work.

10. References:

1. Mahapatra, G., & Dash, S. (2022). Impact of mid-career education in a transforming work context and future implications for the Executive Education Program. https://research.iimb.ac.in/work_papers/618/
2. Mahapatra, G., & Dash, S. (2021). Measuring the impact and effectiveness of mid-career education program: An exploratory study in the Indian context. https://research.iimb.ac.in/work_papers/596/
3. Bukth, T., & Fatima, K. (2024). The influence of job characteristics on the motivation and satisfaction of mid-career professionals. *Psychology*, *15*(11), 1760-1790. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Tanisha-Bukth/publication/386129223_The_Influence_of_Job_Characteristics_on_the_Motivation_and_Satisfaction_of_Mid-Career_Professionals/links/674aae01a7fbc259f1a120cc/The-Influence-of-Job-Characteristics-on-the-Motivation-and-Satisfaction-of-Mid-Career-Professionals.pdf
4. Kitchlew, N., Shahzad, K., Bajwa, S., & Aslam, H. (2021). Evaluation of executive education programs to enhance mid-career employees role-based performance: Organizational perspective. *Journal of Quantitative Methods*, *5*(2), 75-105. https://ojs.umt.edu.pk/index.php/jqm/article/view/883
5. Hruby, J. (2026). From classroom to career: Longitudinal evidence of leadership transfer in executive management education. *The International Journal of Management Education*, *24*(2), 101389. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1472811726000339
6. Negm, E. M. (2023). A student's satisfaction model for an executive education blended learning approach, considering aspects for marketing applications. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, *13*(6), 1286-1304. https://www.emerald.com/heswbl/article/13/6/1286/97817
7. Kraimer, M. L., Greco, L., Seibert, S. E., & Sargent, L. D. (2019). An investigation of academic career success: The new tempo of academic life. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *18*(2), 128-152. https://journals.aom.org/doi/abs/10.5465/amle.2017.0391
8. Korotov, K., & Kaganer, E. (2025). *Teaching executive education*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
9. Ketterer, M. (2023). Knowledge Workers' Self-Directed Learning Framework

for ‘Future of Work’Era. https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/801041

10. VanAntwerp, J. J., & Wilson, D. (2018). Differences in motivation patterns among early and mid-career engineers. *Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering*, *24*(3). https://www.dl.begellhouse.com/journals/00551c876cc2f027,1c5a21585279c945,435f72dd3e2d259a.html
11. Górka, E., Baran, D., Wojak, G., Zupok, S., Ćwiąkała, M., & Ważna, E. (2025). The evolving value of the MBA: external factors and career impact. https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/handle/123456789/142248
12. Wilmot, A. M. (2024). Mid-Career Middle Leaders: Challenges, Coping Mechanisms, Support Systems, and Prospects for Professional Growth and Development. https://www.emerald.com/books/edited-volume/18731/chapter/102402426
13. Shetti, B. (2018). Role of MBA in career building for working professionals. *Available at SSRN 3210656*. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3210656
14. Ambatipudi, V. (2024, April). Experiential Learning in the Digital Era: Evaluating Methodologies in Online Executive MBA Programs. In the International *Conference on Work Integrated Learning* (pp. 165-194). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-96-0201-8_10
15. Tasneem, B., Azhar, M., & Ambatipudi, V. (2024, April). Revolutionizing Executive Education: AI Tutors and Tailored MBA Learning Experiences. In the International *Conference on Work Integrated Learning* (pp. 663-691). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-96-0201-8_42
16. Magalhães, M., Guimarães, L., Costa-Lobo, C., Vázquez-Justo, E., & Matos, R. (2021). Distance Learning Has a High Training Potential in the Workplace—Executive MBA, EaD, Business Management. In *Perspectives and Trends in Education and Technology: Selected Papers from ICITED 2021* (pp. 999-1013). Singapore: Springer Singapore. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-16-5063-5_82
17. Stanton, W. W., & Stanton, A. D. A. (2017). Traditional and online learning in executive education: How both will survive and thrive. *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education*, *15*(1), 8-24.

https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/dsji.12119

18. Aithal, P. S., & Karanth, B. (2024). A new model of super innovative MBA programme to achieve its objective of creating super executives. *Poornaprajna International Journal of Teaching & Research Case Studies (PIJTRCS)*, *1*(1), 1-27. http://poornaprajnapublication.com/index.php/pijtrcs/article/view/12
19. Kitchlew, N. (2020). Does executive MBA deliver? Exploration of developmental outcomes and participants' perceptions of delivery effectiveness. *Journal of Management and Research*, *7*(2), 222-251. https://ojs.umt.edu.pk/index.php/jmr/article/view/567
20. Scruton, I. G. (2018). MBA Student Expectations: MBA Online and MBA Classroom Student Expectations for Leadership Skills Development in an MBA Program. https://fisherpub.sjf.edu/education_etd/348/
21. Wood, J. D. M., de Paeztron, O., Li, N., Raasch, J., Peller-Semmens, C., Purdy, L., ... & Symonds, G. (2026). Enhancing online MBA programmes: Student perceptions and key factors in programme design and delivery. *British Educational Research Journal*, *52*(1), 235-252. https://bera-journals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/berj.4215
22. Prince, M., Burns, D., Lu, X., & Winsor, R. (2015). Knowledge and skills transfer between MBA and workplace. *Journal of workplace learning*, *27*(3), 207-225. https://www.emerald.com/jwl/article/27/3/207/253830
23. Hernandez, D. O. (2015). *MBA programs: Learning, conditions, and outcomes*. Capella University.https://search.proquest.com/openview/4054928df52bae0d59bc3c78fbaf8547/1?pq-origsit e=gscholar&cbl=18750
24. Rubens, A., Schoenfeld, G. A., Schaffer, B. S., & Leah, J. S. (2018). Self-awareness and leadership: Developing an individual strategic professional development plan in an MBA leadership course. *The International Journal of Management Education*, *16*(1), 1-13. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1472811716301732
25. Barrett, B. (2016). CREATING GRADUATE STUDENT STRATEGIES FOR ACADEMIC AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT ENHANCEMENT FOR VIRTUAL MBA PROGRAMS. In *ICERI2016 Proceedings* (pp. 2792-2798). IATED. https://library.iated.org/view/BARRETT2016CRE
26. Sinha, B., Roberts, D. P., & Jane, C. (2020). Academic MBA programs for the 21st century workforce development. *American International Journal of Business*

Management, *3*(10), 94-105.

https://www.aijbm.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/L31094105.pdf

27. Marino, J., Rivero, A. G., & Dabos, G. E. (2019). MBAs and career development: a literature review from the human capital perspective. *Cuadernos de Administración (Universidad Del Valle)*, *35*(64), 110-127. http://www.scielo.org.co/scielo.php?pid=S0120-46452019000200110&script=sci_arttext
28. Grant, K. A. (2025). Developing MBA students' management consulting skills through experiential learning. In *Practical Applications of Experiential and Community-Engaged Learning Methods in Business* (pp. 91-110). Edward Elgar Publishing. https://www.elgaronline.com/abstract/book/9781035315079/chapter6.xml
29. Moldoveanu, M., & Narayandas, D. (2019). The future of leadership development. *Harvard business review*, *97*(2), 40-48. http://sip-prod-files.s3.amazonaws.com/filestore/R1902B-PDF-ENG_5d02aa085c9e7c085811b6f0_1.PDF
30. Andrade, M. S., & Alden-Rivers, B. (2019). Developing a framework for sustainable growth of flexible learning opportunities. *Higher Education Pedagogies*, *4*(1), 1-16. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/23752696.2018.1564879
31. Osman, Z., Awang, A. I., & Subramaniam, T. Optimising Leadership Performance in Open Online Flexible Distance Learning Higher Education Institutions Amidst the Digital Transformation. https://kwpublications.com/papers_submitted/17030/optimising-leadership-performance-in-open-online-flexible-distance-learning-higher-education-institutions-amidst-the-digital-transformation.pdf
32. Osman, Z., Mohamad, R. K., & Kasbun, N. (2024). Influence of organizational culture and leader's engagement on leadership performance in open online flexible distance learning higher education institutions. *International Journal of Academic Research in Economics and Management Sciences*, *13*(3). https://knowledgewords.com/index.php/ijarems/article/view/1465
33. Dar, M., & Sharma, D. (2024). PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE ERA OF ONLINE EDUCATION. *Roots International Journal of Multidisciplinary Researches*, *11*(1), 30-37. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5204816

34. Akmen, V. O., Penkina, N. M., & Sorokina, V. P. (2024). The impact of the modern environment on the development of education and professional flexibility of teachers. https://dspace.kntu.kr.ua/bitstreams/8c9b7ce1-94f4-49e9-820f-a4faaffaa44e/download
35. Hilliard, A. T. (2015). Global blended learning practices for teaching and learning, leadership and professional development. *Journal of International Education Research*, *11*(3), 179-188. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1070786
36. Najjar, N., Rouphael, M., Bitar, T., & Hleihel, W. (2025, February). The rise and drop of online learning: adaptability and future prospects. In *Frontiers in Education* (Vol. 10, p. 1522905). Frontiers Media SA. https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/education/articles/10.3389/feduc.2025.1522905/full
37. Jandigulov, A., Abdallah, A. K., Tikhonova, Y., & Gorozhanina, E. (2023). Management and leadership in online learning. *Education and Information Technologies*, *28*(10), 13423-13437. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10639-023-11699-4
38. Andrin, G., Kilag, O. K., Groenewald, E., Benitez, J., Dagala, F., & Ubay, R. (2024). Borderless learning environments: impacts on educational management strategies. *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence (IMJRISE)*, *1*(2), 43-49. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Elma-Groenewald-2/publication/378498277_Borderless_Learning_Environments_Impacts_on_Educational_Management_Strategies/links/65ddc304e7670d36abe2b51e/Borderless-Learning-Environments-Impacts-on-Educational-Management-Strategies.pdf
39. Unnikrishnan, D., & Rajeev, P. N. (2024). Managing career plateaus for mid-career professionals: A process-driven practice intervention using life-design counseling. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, *61*(4), 257-277. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/joec.12233
40. Alam, M. A. (2021). The perceived impact of managerial education programs on professionals' development: A review article. *Journal of Business and Management Sciences*, *9*(1), 58-62.

view_Article/links/64aad503b9ed6874a509d14f/The-Perceived-Impact-of-Managerial-Education-Programs-on-Professionals-Development-A-Review-Article.pdf

41. Greene, A. K., Szczygiel, L. A., Thomas, J. D., Jones, R. D., Cutter, C. M., Feldman, E. L., ... & Jagsi, R. (2025). Leadership experiences and perceptions of mid-career to senior clinician-scientists: a qualitative exploration. *Academic medicine*, *100*(1), 42-49. https://academic.oup.com/academicmedicine/article-abstract/100/1/42/8326132
42. Macedo, R. R. D., Veloso, E. F. R., Pinsky, V., & Trevisan, L. (2023). Career management in the digital age: a study of leadership's competencies and practices applied for IT professionals. *Revista de Administração da UFSM*, *16*(1), e3. https://www.scielo.br/j/reaufsm/a/vRMRQGzwX5MhjRCL7hStdSB/?lang=en
43. Boyatzis, R. E., & Cavanagh, K. V. (2018). Leading change: Developing emotional, social, and cognitive competencies in managers during an MBA program. In *Emotional intelligence in education: Integrating research with practice* (pp. 403-426). Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-90633-1_15
44. Avetisyan, P., Gevorgyan, N., & Tadevosyan, M. R. (2024). The Role of Managerial Competencies in Higher Education: Navigating Current Transformational Trends. *Revista De Gestão Social E Ambiental*, *18*(10), e09400. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/616c/69041dca742326554126dc0d3b23e8dc7809.pdf
45. Isazada, E., & Jafarov, S. (2024). Mastering Business Leadership: The value of an MBA in today's world. *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review*, *7*(7), 8790-8795. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sarkhan-Jafarov/publication/386512997_Title_Mastering_Business_Leadership_The_Value_of_an_MBA_in_Today's_World/links/675406666 ad10b614ef361efe/Title-Mastering-Business-Leadership-The-Value-of-an-MBA-in-Toda ys-World.pdf